

***Over 50 organizations from across the state awarded federal funding to combat violence against women***

**ANNAPOLIS, MD (October 31, 2011)** – Governor Martin O'Malley, joined by U.S. Senator Ben Cardin, Lt. Governor Anthony G. Brown, Maryland Attorney General Doug Gansler, advocates, community leaders, families and friends of domestic violence victims, and other state and local officials, today announced \$2.2 million in awards to over 50 local organizations through the S\*T\*O\*P (Services, Training, Officers and Prosecutors) Violence Against Women Act (VAWA). These federal funds are formula grants allocated from the U.S. Department of Justice Office on Violence Against Women that will assist organizations throughout the state that work to help women who are the victims of domestic violence, sexual assault, stalking and dating violence.

"The most important responsibilities we have in government are to create jobs and to protect the public's safety," said Governor O'Malley. "In Maryland, we have set the big goal to reduce violence against women and children 25 percent by the end of next year. Today's funding from the federal Violence Against Women Act is an important resource in achieving that goal, helping organizations and advocates from across the State who work on the front lines every day to combat domestic violence. Though we are seeing decreases in the number of domestic violence-related deaths on record, even one life lost is one too many. Together, with our federal, state and local partners, we can continue to make progress in saving lives."

The VAWA program is administered by the Governor's Office of Crime Control & Prevention (GOCCP) which provides funding to law enforcement, prosecution, the court system and non-profit, non-government victim service agencies. Recipients are encouraged to forge lasting partnerships between the criminal justice system and victim advocacy organizations, and to look beyond traditional resources by partnering with community and faith-based organizations to respond more vigorously to domestic violence, sexual assault, dating violence, and stalking crimes.

Maryland's Congressional delegation has been integral in securing these funds for Maryland.

"I have absolutely no tolerance for domestic violence," said Senator Barbara A. Mikulski (D-Md.), who authored the Violence Against Women Act and, as Chairwoman of the Commerce, Justice and Science Appropriations Subcommittee, puts funds in the federal checkbook to fund federal VAWA efforts. "Maryland's STOP program has proven a valuable resource in the fight to curb domestic violence. I was proud to put funds in the federal checkbook to support this important program that gives counselors, law enforcement officers and health care personnel the resources to serve victims of domestic violence."

"Nearly three in four Americans personally know someone who is or has been a victim of domestic violence, and these statistics permeate all socioeconomic, ethnic, racial, and religious groups in our nation," said U.S. Senator Ben Cardin. "This funding will significantly enhance domestic violence prevention efforts and improve the criminal justice system's response to violence against women."

Congressman Steny Hoyer added, "I have long supported efforts to equip organizations serving battered women and their children as well as the law enforcement community with the resources needed to support victims and prosecute perpetrators. I am proud to support the STOP program and the women and men leading the cause against family violence."

Attorney General Doug Gansler chairs the Governor's Family Violence Council, established in 1995 to provide the Governor with timely and accurate information on family violence with recommendations that will reduce and eliminate abusive behaviors.

"These grants are critical to Maryland's continued efforts to fight domestic violence and to protect victims of domestic abuse," said Attorney General Gansler. "We need these resources to enhance prosecution of domestic abusers and to support the professionals who help victims through the legal system with dignity, even as they recover physically and mentally from such abuse."

Lt. Governor Brown is also a member of the Council, and [a steadfast advocate for ending domestic violence.](#)

"Domestic violence is a tragedy that has impacted the lives of far too many, and those targeted by their abusers are not the only victims. The victims are also the families who share the pain of

their loved ones, the communities that are shaken by these heinous acts, and our society as a whole,” said Lt. Governor Brown. “Addressing domestic violence is the collective responsibility of each and every one of us. These grants will help communities throughout Maryland provide critical support to victims and take another step towards eliminating this senseless crime.”

In Maryland, there were 38 domestic violence-related homicides in calendar years 2009 and 2010 combined. In fiscal year 2010, there were over 18,000 temporary and over 9,000 final protective orders filed in Maryland. According to the National Domestic Violence Hotline, Maryland is ranked 17<sup>th</sup> in terms of call volume.

The O'Malley-Brown Administration remains committed to protecting Maryland's families by reducing the number of domestic violence incidents and homicides, and educating communities about the effects of domestic violence. The Governor has set a strategic policy goal to reduce violent crimes committed against women and children by 25 percent by the end of 2012. Since taking office, the Administration has:

- Signed legislation that provides law enforcement officers, child protective services, social workers, and all who work to protect Maryland's child victims with the resources needed to maintain the viability of Child Advocacy Centers in Maryland.
- Signed legislation that authorizes a police officer to arrest a person without a warrant if the officer has probable cause to believe that the person has violated a condition of pre-trial or post-trial release to further protect the victims of crime.
- Passed legislation that enables judges to extend the duration of a protective order beyond the original expiration date if the judge finds by clear & convincing evidence that the Respondent has committed a subsequent act of domestic violence.
- Supported a change in Maryland law to allow for the removal of firearms from domestic abusers. Now, judges have the authority to order the surrender of firearms from Respondents who are the subject of Temporary Protective Orders & made it mandatory for Respondents in Permanent Protective Order cases to surrender all firearms.

- Supported a system to help track the number of arrests that are related to domestic violence to get an accurate handle on the scope of the problem so that necessary resources can be dedicated to assisting victims.